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GAMBIT
L. WEEKS

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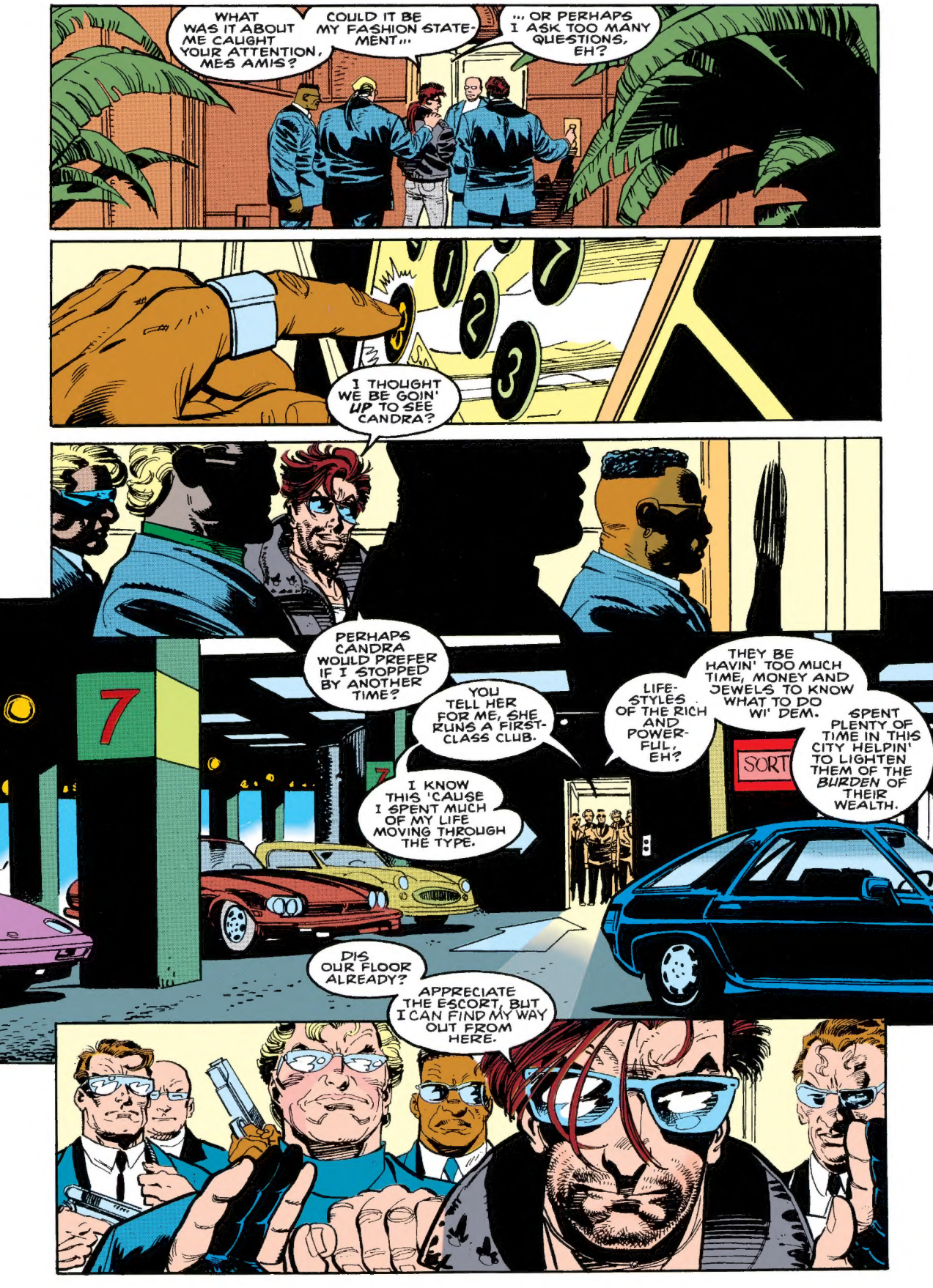
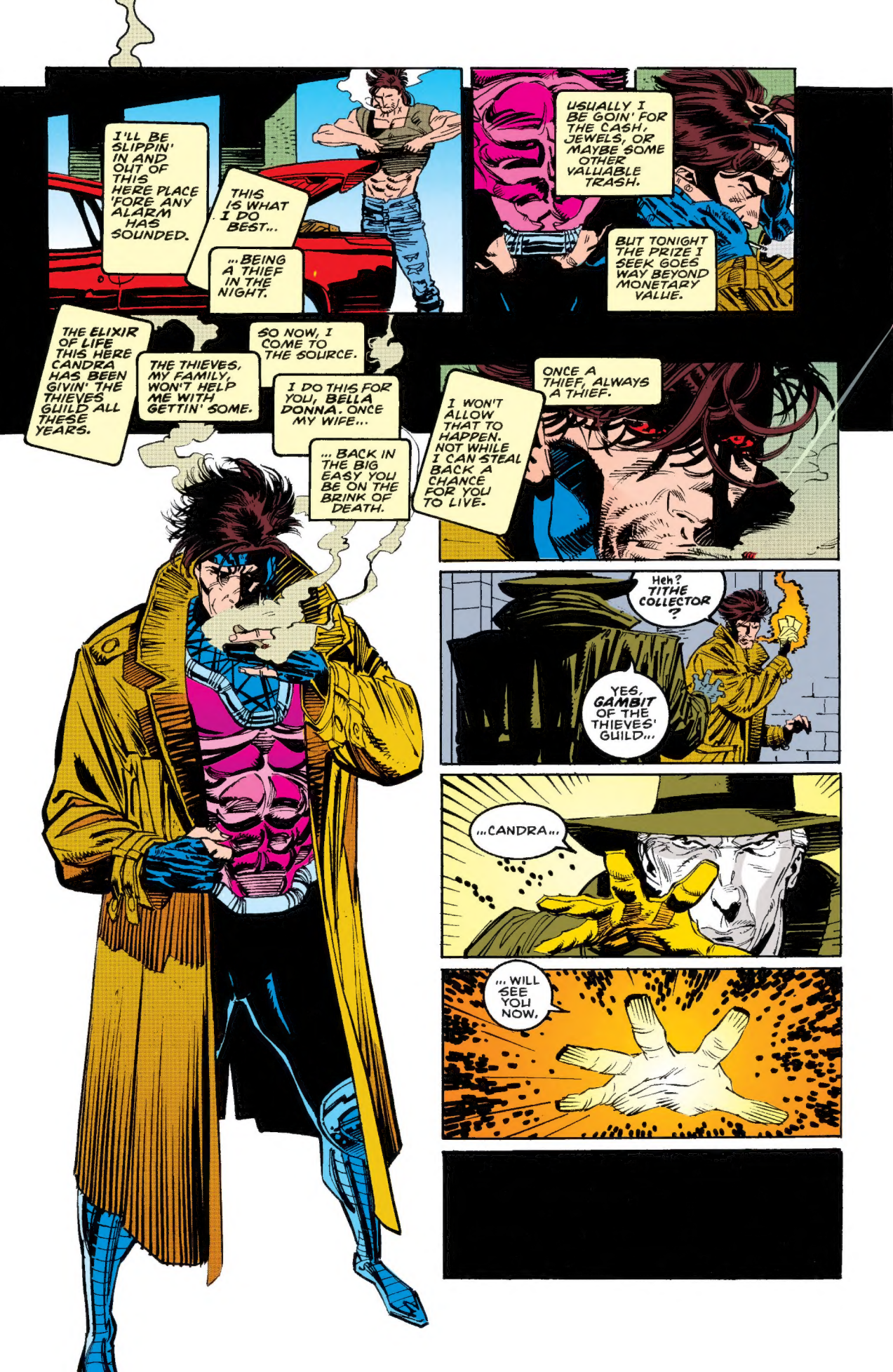
I THOUGHT THAT GAMBLING WAS A PASSION AMONG YOU AMERICANS.
M'SWEET, I NEVER GAMBLE...
...I WIN.
AT EVERY-THING.
ME, I'M A LOUISIANAN.
I FIND MY PASSION IN FAR MORE PLEASURABLE PURSUITS.
PERHAPS YOU'D CARE TO JOIN ME?
IT WOULD BE AN EX-PERIENCE ?
ONE NOT SOON FORGOTTEN.
MONSIEUR LEBEAU?
OUI?
THE MANAGER WOULD LIKE THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY, SIR.
LOVE TO OBLIGE, MON AMI, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE...
WE INSIST, SIR.
I BELIEVE THAT THIS IS THE APPOINT-MENT I JOURNEYED TO PARIS FOR, MAM'SELLE.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--

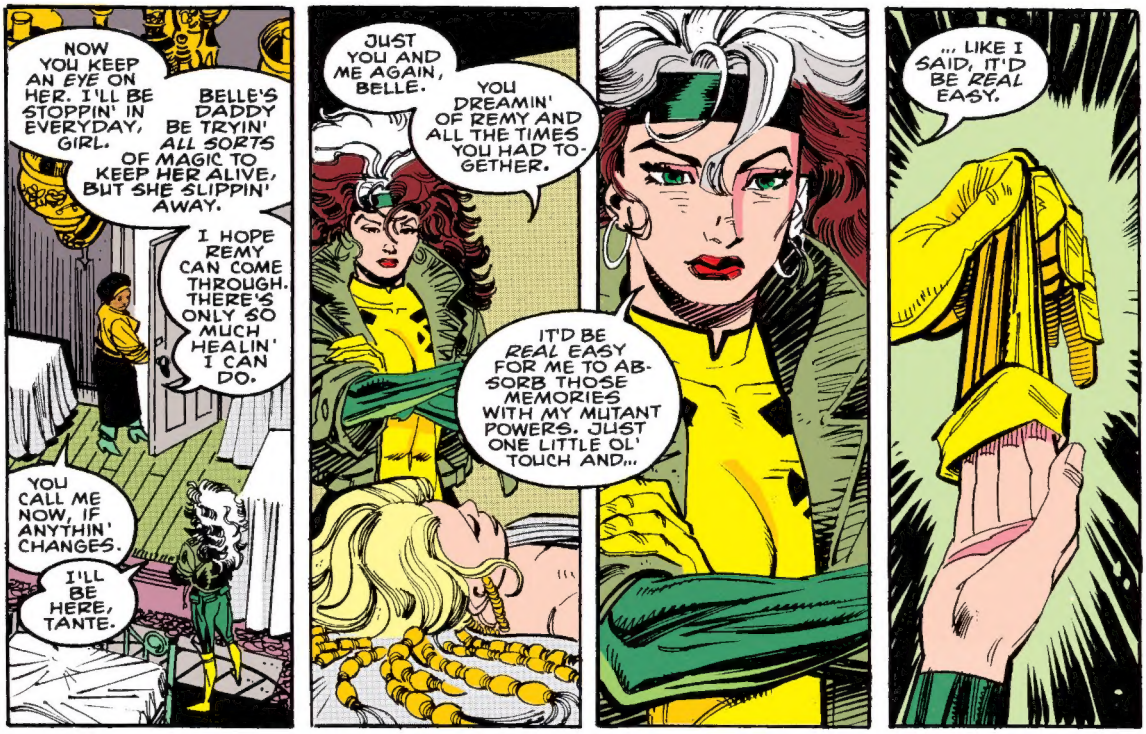

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT ME CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION, MES AMIS?
COULD IT BE MY FASHION STATEMENT...
... OR PERHAPS I ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS, EH?
I THOUGHT WE BE GOIN' UP TO SEE CANDRA?
PERHAPS CANDRA WOULD PREFER IF I STOPPED BY ANOTHER TIME?
YOU TELL HER FOR ME, SHE RUNS A FIRST-CLASS CLUB.
I KNOW THIS 'CAUSE I SPENT MUCH OF MY LIFE MOVING THROUGH THE TYPE.
LIFE-STYLES OF THE RICH AND POWER-FUL, EH?
THEY BE HAVIN' TOO MUCH TIME, MONEY AND JEWELS TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WI' DEM.
SPENT PLENTY OF TIME IN THIS CITY HELPIN' TO LIGHTEN THEM OF THE BURDEN OF THEIR WEALTH.
SORT
DIS OUR FLOOR ALREADY?
APPRECIATE THE ESCORT, BUT I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT FROM HERE.

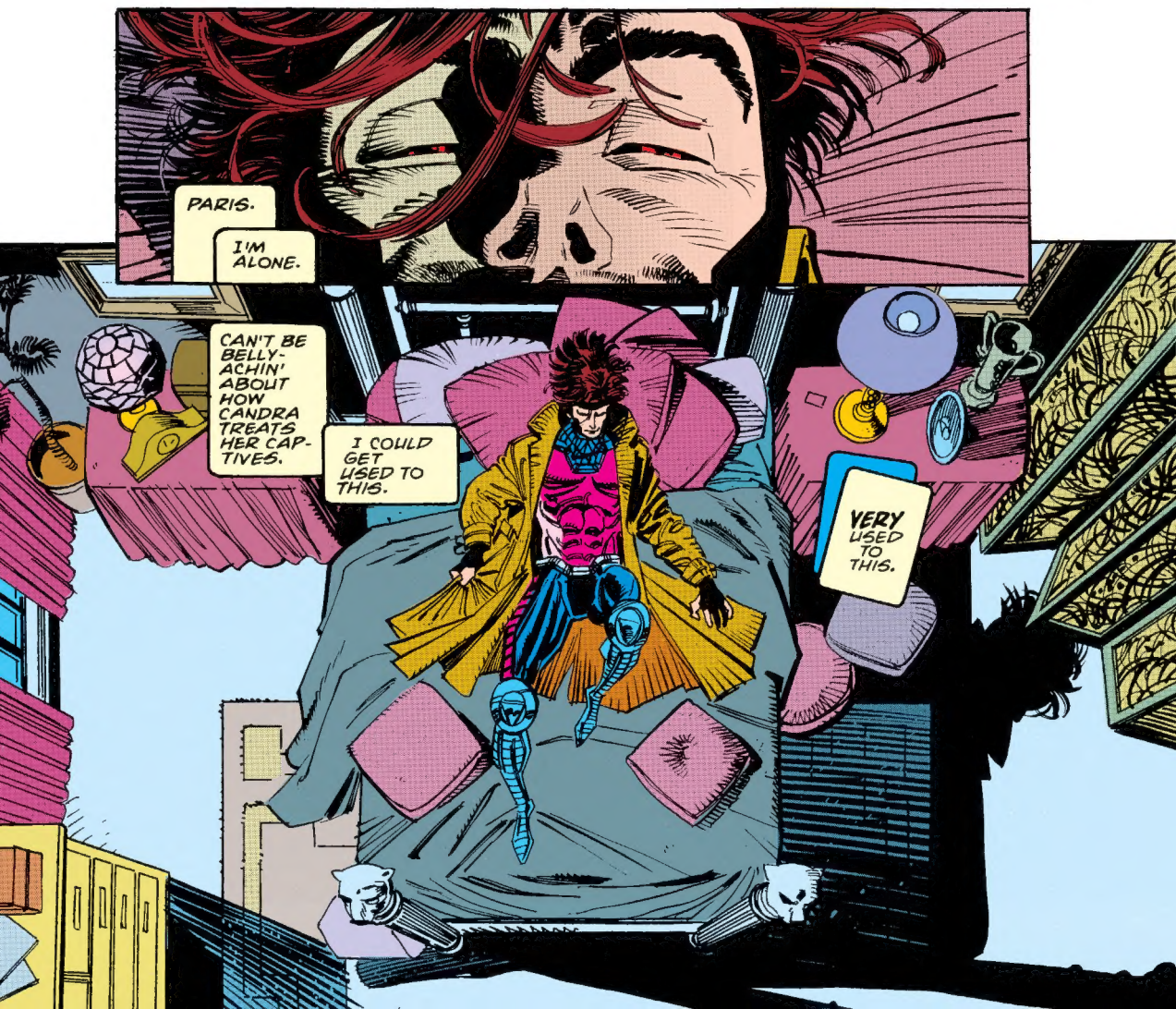
CLIK
CLIK
7
NO, Eh?
TOO MANY OF YOU TO FIGHT.
PLENTY O' PEOPLE HAVE ASSUMED I'D DIE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
SUCH IS LIFE. GOTTA PLAY THE HAND YOU'RE DEALT, eh?
MAYBE A LAST SMOKE, MY FRIEND? AND SOMETHING TO LIGHT IT WITH?
OUI. BUT PLEASE BE QUICK.
THANKS. I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.
NICE.
GOLD, Heh? EXPENSIVE, AND...
...IT TAKES A CHARGE REAL GOOD.

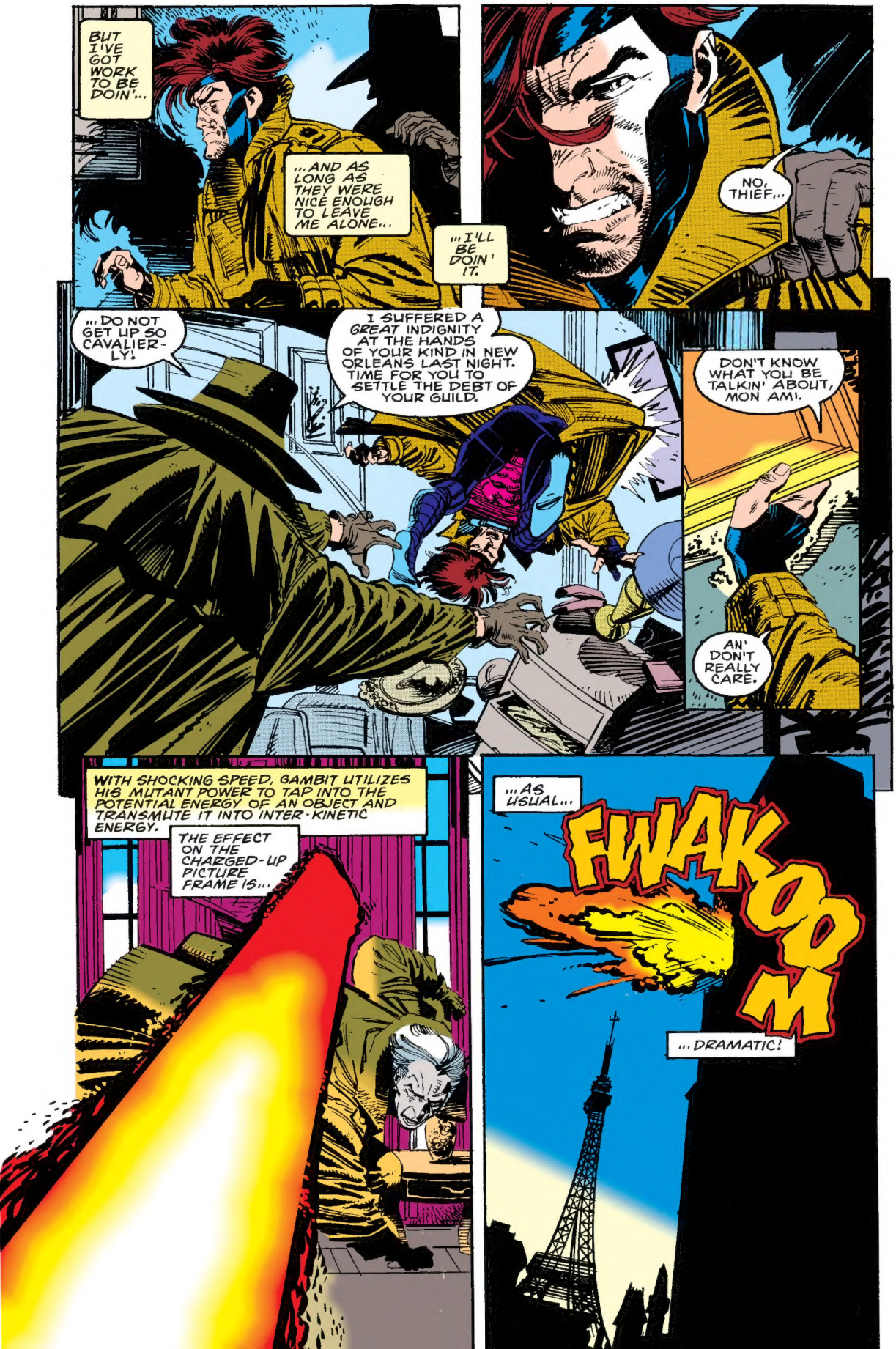
BA
VOOM
I'LL BE THANKIN' YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS IN CONFIRMIN' THAT I HAD THE RIGHT PLACE.
THANKS TOO FOR THE SMOKE, BUT LOOK HERE...
...I ALREADY HAD ME A LIGHT.
TIME I GO VISITIN' THIS CANDRA. SHE HAS SOMETHIN' I WANT.
BUT FIRST-- TIME T'CHANGE INTO MY WORKIN' CLOTHES.

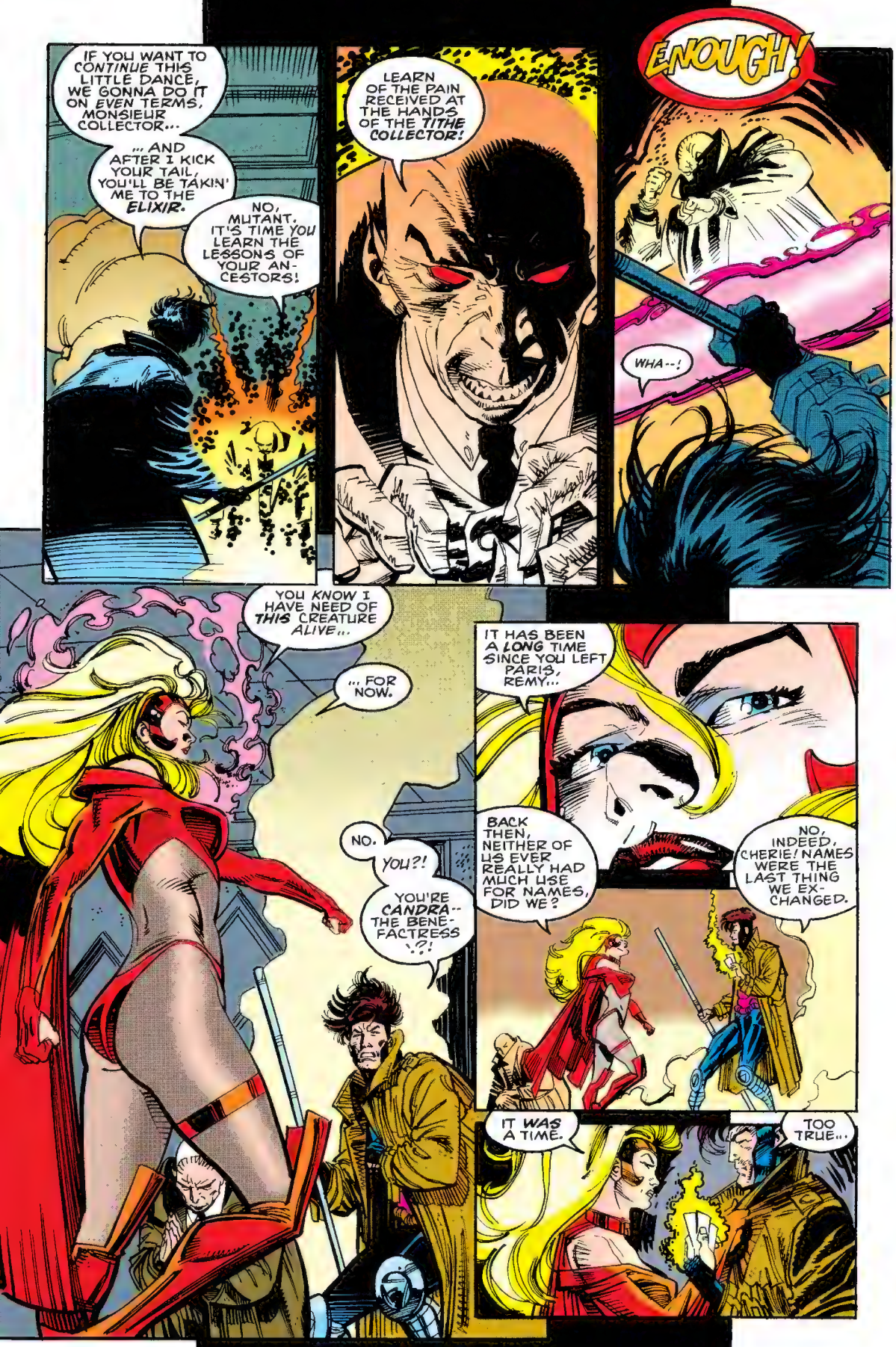

I'LL BE SLIPPIN' IN AND OUT OF THIS HERE PLACE 'FORE ANY ALARM HAS SOUNDED.
THIS IS WHAT I DO BEST...
...BEING A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.
USUALLY I BE GOIN' FOR THE CASH, JEWELS, OR MAYBE SOME OTHER VALUABLE TRASH.
BUT TONIGHT THE PRIZE I SEEK GOES WAY BEYOND MONETARY VALUE.
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE THIS HERE CANDRA HAS BEEN GIVIN' THE THIEVES GUILD ALL THESE YEARS.
THE THIEVES, MY FAMILY, WON'T HELP ME WITH GETTIN' SOME.
SO NOW, I COME TO THE SOURCE.
I DO THIS FOR YOU, BELLA DONNA. ONCE MY WIFE...
...BACK IN THE BIG EASY YOU BE ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.
ONCE A THIEF, ALWAYS A THIEF.
I WON'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN. NOT WHILE I CAN STEAL BACK A CHANCE FOR YOU TO LIVE.
Heh? TITHE COLLECTOR ?
YES, GAMBIT OF THE THIEVES' GUILD...
...CANDRA...
...WILL SEE YOU NOW.

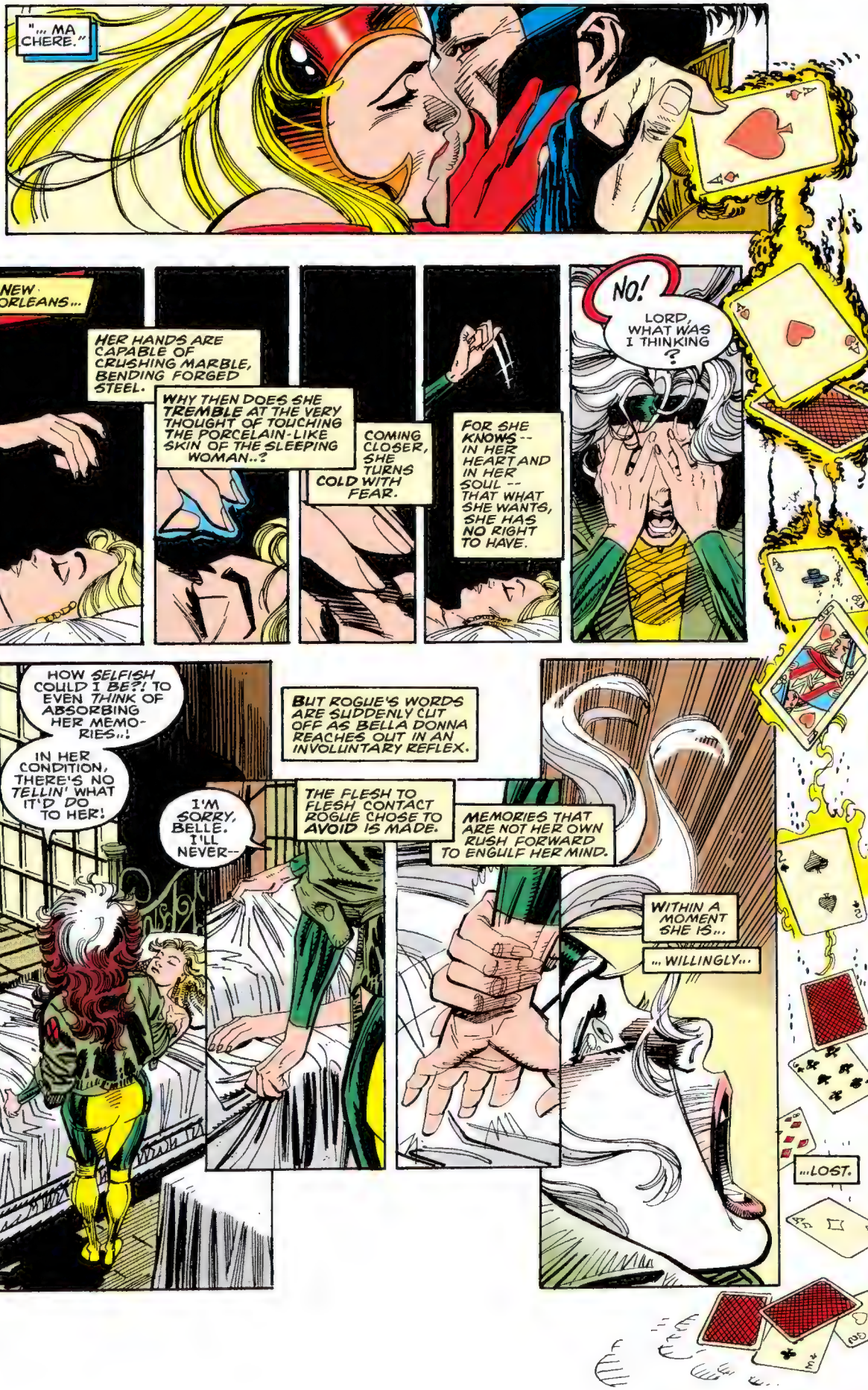
AS GAMBIT SLIPS INTO A WARM, DEEP, DARKNESS, HIS FINAL THOUGHTS TURN BACK TOWARD NEW ORLEANS...
...TO HIS GARDEN DISTRICT HOME, WHERE HIS FELLOW X-MAN, ROGUE, AWAITS HIS RE-TURN...
... AND FEARS, IN SPITE OF HERSELF, WHAT THAT RETURN WILL BRING.
THAT REMY WAS ALWAYS A SCAMP AND A HEART STEALER, BUT HE GOT A HEART OF GOLD HIMSELF!
I 'MEMBER WHEN HE FIRST BE SPARKIN' THIS LITTLE FLOWER HERE. HE COME TO ME AND SAY,
"TANTE MATTIE, YOU BE HAVIN' A LOVE POTION I CAN USE?"
I TELL HIM, "BOY, I'M A HEALER, NOW YOU GO WIN BELLA DONNA OVER PROPER LIKE!"
Y'ALL A DOCTOR, THEN?
I'M A HEALER, GIRL! MUCH BETTER THAN ANYONE TRAINED IN THEM FANCY MEDICAL SCHOOLS.
I'VE GOT THE EYE AND THE TOUCH, ROGUE!
AND IT DON'T BE TAKIN' NO SPECIAL POWERS TO SEE YOU LOVE REMY, DON'T YOU?
AND HERE YOU ARE, WATCHIN' OVER HIS WIFE.
YOU POOR THING.
REMEMBER, CHILD, THE GOOD LORD DON'T GIVE US A BIGGER BURDEN THAN WE CAN CARRY.

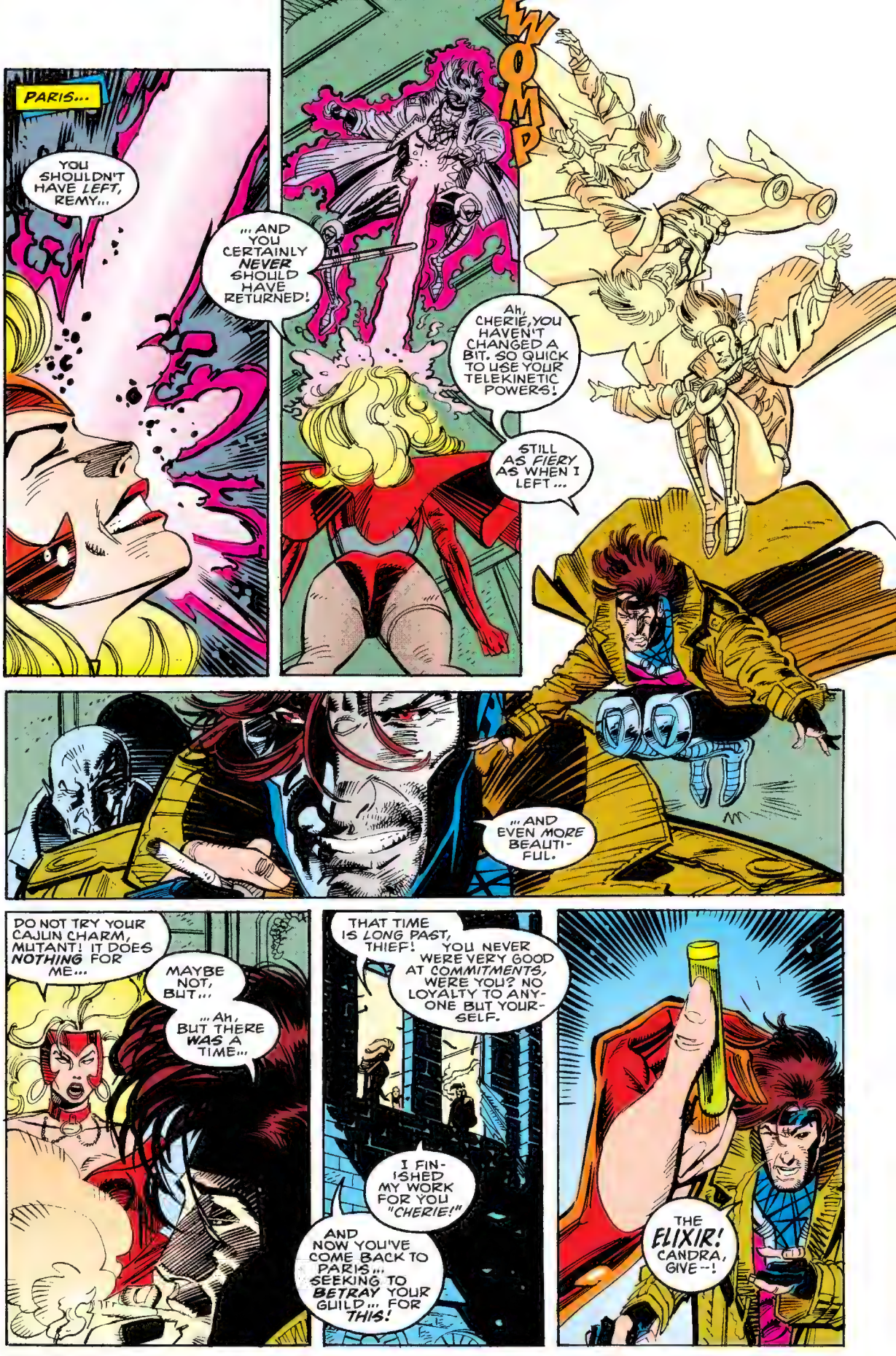

NOW YOU KEEP AN EYE ON HER. I'LL BE STOPPIN' IN EVERYDAY, GIRL.
BELLE'S DADDY BE TRYIN' ALL SORTS OF MAGIC TO KEEP HER ALIVE, BUT SHE SLIPPIN' AWAY.
I HOPE REMY CAN COME THROUGH. THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH HEALIN' I CAN DO.
YOU CALL ME NOW, IF ANYTHIN' CHANGES.
I'LL BE HERE, TANTE.
JUST YOU AND ME AGAIN, BELLE.
YOU DREAMIN' OF REMY AND ALL THE TIMES YOU HAD TOGETHER.
IT'D BE REAL EASY FOR ME TO ABSORB THOSE MEMORIES WITH MY MUTANT POWERS. JUST ONE LITTLE OL' TOUCH AND...
... LIKE I SAID, IT'D BE REAL EASY.

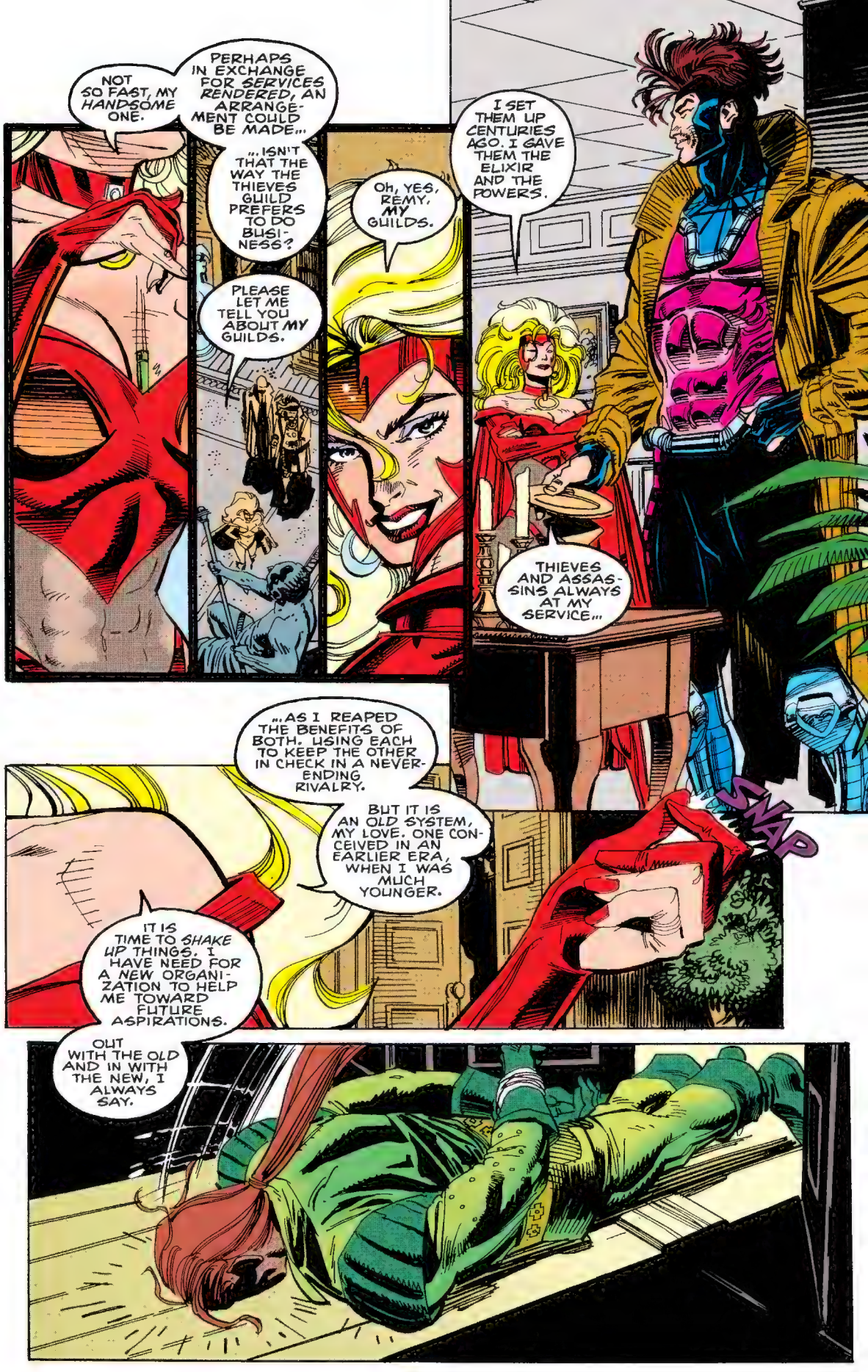

PARIS.
I'M ALONE.
CAN'T BE BELLY-ACHIN' ABOUT HOW CANDRA TREATS HER CAPTIVES.
I COULD GET USED TO THIS.
VERY USED TO THIS.


BUT I'VE GOT WORK TO BE DOIN'...
...AND AS LONG AS THEY WERE NICE ENOUGH TO LEAVE ME ALONE...
...I'LL BE DOIN' IT.
NO, THIEF...
...DO NOT GET UP SO CAVALIER-LY!
I SUFFERED A GREAT INDIGNITY AT THE HANDS OF YOUR KIND IN NEW ORLEANS LAST NIGHT. TIME FOR YOU TO SETTLE THE DEBT OF YOUR GUILD.
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU BE TALKIN' ABOUT, MON AMI.
AN' DON'T REALLY CARE.
WITH SHOCKING SPEED, GAMBIT UTILIZES HIS MUTANT POWER TO TAP INTO THE POTENTIAL ENERGY OF AN OBJECT AND TRANSMUTE IT INTO INTER-KINETIC ENERGY.
THE EFFECT ON THE CHARGED-UP PICTURE FRAME IS...
...AS USUAL...
FWAKOOM
...DRAMATIC!

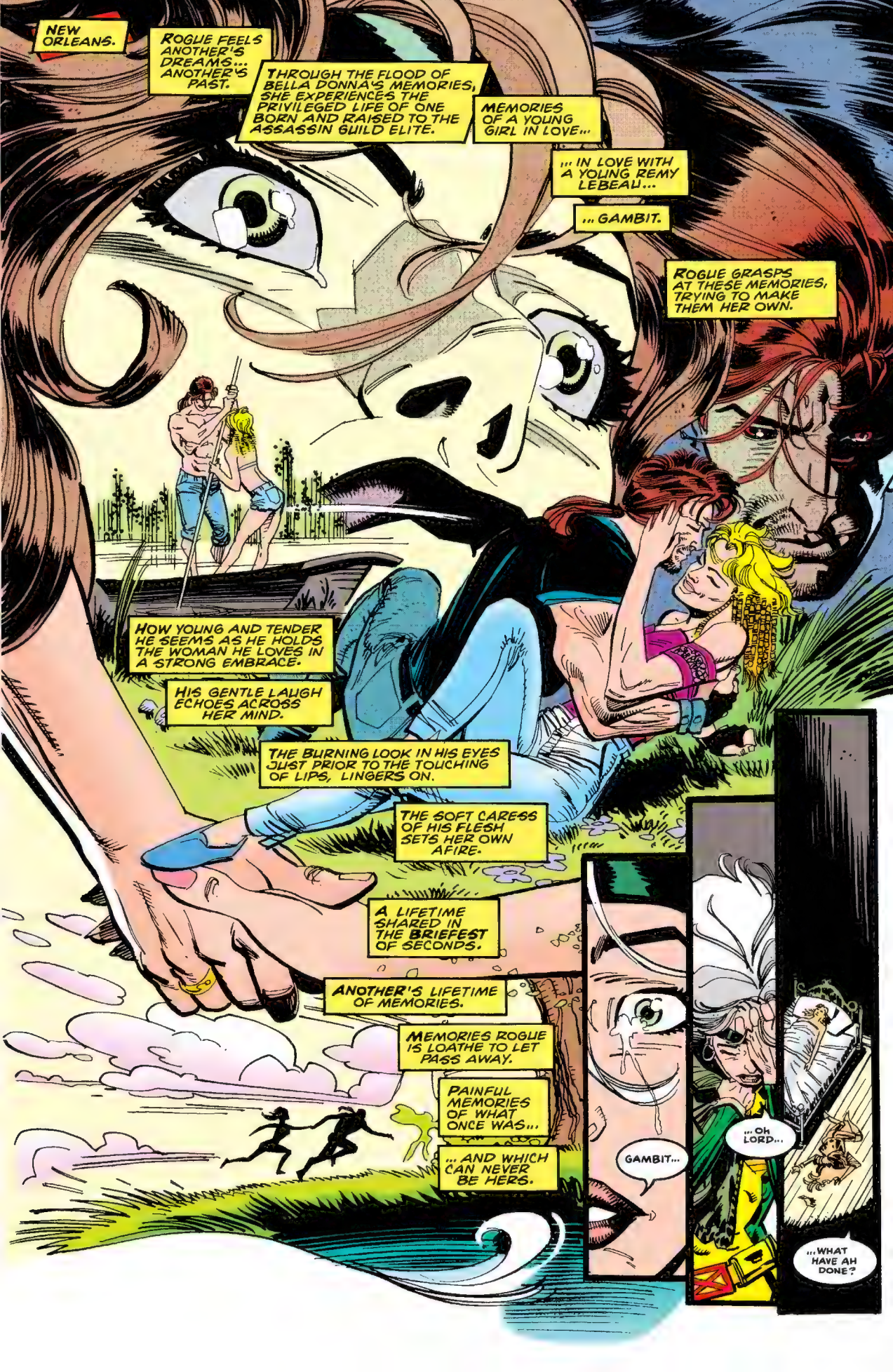

IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE THIS LITTLE DANCE, WE GONNA DO IT ON EVEN TERMS, MONSIEUR COLLECTOR...
... AND AFTER I KICK YOUR TAIL, YOU'LL BE TAKIN' ME TO THE ELIXIR.
NO, MUTANT. IT'S TIME YOU LEARN THE LESSONS OF YOUR ANCESTORS!
LEARN OF THE PAIN RECEIVED AT THE HANDS OF THE TITHE COLLECTOR!
ENOUGH!
WHA--!
YOU KNOW I HAVE NEED OF THIS CREATURE ALIVE...
... FOR NOW.
NO.
YOU?!
YOU'RE CANDRA-- THE BENEFACTRESS ?!
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU LEFT PARIS, REMY...
BACK THEN, NEITHER OF US EVER REALLY HAD MUCH USE FOR NAMES, DID WE?
NO, INDEED, CHERIE! NAMES WERE THE LAST THING WE EXCHANGED.
IT WAS A TIME.
TOO TRUE...


"... MA CHERE."
NEW ORLEANS...
HER HANDS ARE CAPABLE OF CRUSHING MARBLE, BENDING FORGED STEEL.
WHY THEN DOES SHE TREMBLE AT THE VERY THOUGHT OF TOUCHING THE PORCELAIN-LIKE SKIN OF THE SLEEPING WOMAN..?
COMING CLOSER, SHE TURNS COLD WITH FEAR.
FOR SHE KNOWS -- IN HER HEART AND IN HER SOUL -- THAT WHAT SHE WANTS, SHE HAS NO RIGHT TO HAVE.
NO! LORD, WHAT WAS I THINKING?
HOW SELFISH COULD I BE?! TO EVEN THINK OF ABSORBING HER MEMO-RIES..!
IN HER CONDITION, THERE'S NO TELLIN' WHAT IT'D DO TO HER!
I'M SORRY, BELLE. I'LL NEVER--
BUT ROGUE'S WORDS ARE SUDDENLY CUT OFF AS BELLA DONNA REACHES OUT IN AN INVOLUNTARY REFLEX.
THE FLESH TO FLESH CONTACT ROGUE CHOSE TO AVOID IS MADE.
MEMORIES THAT ARE NOT HER OWN RUSH FORWARD TO ENGULF HER MIND.
WITHIN A MOMENT SHE IS...
... WILLINGLY...
...LOST.


PARIS...
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT, REMY...
...AND YOU CERTAINLY NEVER SHOULD HAVE RETURNED!
SWOMP
Ah, CHERIE, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT. SO QUICK TO USE YOUR TELEKINETIC POWERS!
STILL AS FIERY AS WHEN I LEFT...
...AND EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL.
DO NOT TRY YOUR CAJUN CHARM, MUTANT! IT DOES NOTHING FOR ME...
MAYBE NOT, BUT...
...Ah, BUT THERE WAS A TIME...
THAT TIME IS LONG PAST, THIEF! YOU NEVER WERE VERY GOOD AT COMMITMENTS, WERE YOU? NO LOYALTY TO ANYONE BUT YOURSELF.
I FINISHED MY WORK FOR YOU "CHERIE!"
AND NOW YOU'VE COME BACK TO PARIS... SEEKING TO BETRAY YOUR GUILD... FOR THIS!
THE ELIXIR! CANDRA, GIVE--!


NOT SO FAST, MY HANDSOME ONE.
PERHAPS IN EXCHANGE FOR SERVICES RENDERED, AN ARRANGEMENT COULD BE MADE...
...ISN'T THAT THE WAY THE THIEVES GUILD PREFERS TO DO BUSINESS?
PLEASE LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY GUILDS.
Oh, YES, REMY, MY GUILDS.
I SET THEM UP CENTURIES AGO. I GAVE THEM THE ELIXIR AND THE POWERS.
THIEVES AND ASSASSINS ALWAYS AT MY SERVICE...
...AS I REAPED THE BENEFITS OF BOTH, USING EACH TO KEEP THE OTHER IN CHECK IN A NEVER-ENDING RIVALRY.
BUT IT IS AN OLD SYSTEM, MY LOVE. ONE CONCEIVED IN AN EARLIER ERA, WHEN I WAS MUCH YOUNGER.
IT IS TIME TO SHAKE UP THINGS. I HAVE NEED FOR A NEW ORGANIZATION TO HELP ME TOWARD FUTURE ASPIRATIONS.
SNAP
OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW, I ALWAYS SAY.

CHERIE, WE'VE ALWAYS WORKED WELL IN THE PAST... BOTH IN BUSINESS AND PERSONALLY.
LET ME HAVE THE ELIXIR AND I'D BE MORE THAN OBLIGED TO HELP YOU WITH WHATEVER --
SERVICES RENDERED, REMEMBER, REMY?
THERE WAS A TIME I HAD SUCH DREAMS FOR YOU AND ME. WE ARE SO ALIKE --
--WE LOVED THE DANGER LIFE HAD TO OFFER. BUT NOW YOU BOUNCE BETWEEN YOUR COMATOSE WIFE AND YOUR LITTLE X-GIRL LIKE A LOVESICK PUPPY.
STILL CAN'T WALK ON EITHER SIDE OF THE LINE, CAN YOU, BOY? YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO PLAY IT DOWN THE MIDDLE.
WELL, NOT WITH ME... NO LONGER. NOW YOU MUST CHOOSE.
KILL THIS MAN FOR ME, REMY, AND YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL... INCLUDING THE VIALS OF THE ELIXIR TO DO WITH AS YOU WISH.
FATHER?! CANDRA, NO! I'LL KILL YOU FIRST! YOU --
KRAKOOM


NEW ORLEANS.
ROGUE FEELS ANOTHER'S DREAMS... ANOTHER'S PAST.
THROUGH THE FLOOD OF BELLA DONNA'S MEMORIES, SHE EXPERIENCES THE PRIVILEGED LIFE OF ONE BORN AND RAISED TO THE ASSASSIN GUILD ELITE.
MEMORIES OF A YOUNG GIRL IN LOVE...
... IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG REMY LEBEAU...
... GAMBIT.
ROGUE GRASPS AT THESE MEMORIES, TRYING TO MAKE THEM HER OWN.
HOW YOUNG AND TENDER HE SEEMS AS HE HOLDS THE WOMAN HE LOVES IN A STRONG EMBRACE.
HIS GENTLE LAUGH ECHOES ACROSS HER MIND.
THE BURNING LOOK IN HIS EYES JUST PRIOR TO THE TOUCHING OF LIPS, LINGERS ON.
THE SOFT CARESS OF HIS FLESH SETS HER OWN AFIRE.
A LIFETIME SHARED IN THE BRIEFEST OF SECONDS.
ANOTHER'S LIFETIME OF MEMORIES.
MEMORIES ROGUE IS LOATHE TO LET PASS AWAY.
PAINFUL MEMORIES OF WHAT ONCE WAS...
... AND WHICH CAN NEVER BE HERS.
GAMBIT...
... OH LORD...
...WHAT HAVE AH DONE?

"WHAT IN THE NAME O' HEAVEN HAVE AH DONE?"
WHAT A PRETTY PICTURE WE GOT HERE, NEH?
I SEE GAMBIT BEAT ME TO YOU, BUT...
... HE WON'T BE WINNING THE DAY!
I WANT WHAT IS MINE, WITCH! YOU GAVE ME A TASTE OF THE ELIXIR AN' BROUGHT ME BACK FROM THE BRINK O' DEATH.
FOR DIS I STIRRED UP ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE FOR YOU. NOW YOU BE HOLDIN' OUT ON ME. GIVE ME THE ELIXIR!
YOU LOOKIN' TO MAKE ME LAUGH, CANDRA?
YOUR WHIPPIN' BOY COULDN'T HOLD HIS OWN AGAINST US IN NEW ORLEANS. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK HE CAN PROTECT YOU NOW, HEH?
I THINK NOT, JULIEN. I OWE YOU NOTHING.
TITHE COLLECTOR. DESTROY THIS RABBLE!
UNDER CANDRA'S ORDERS I ALLOWED YOU TO WIN THAT SMALL SKIRMISH IN YOUR BACK-WATER CITY, ASSASSIN.
NOW, MY ORDERS ARE QUITE DIFFERENT.
WELL, YOU MIGHT BE SEEIN'...

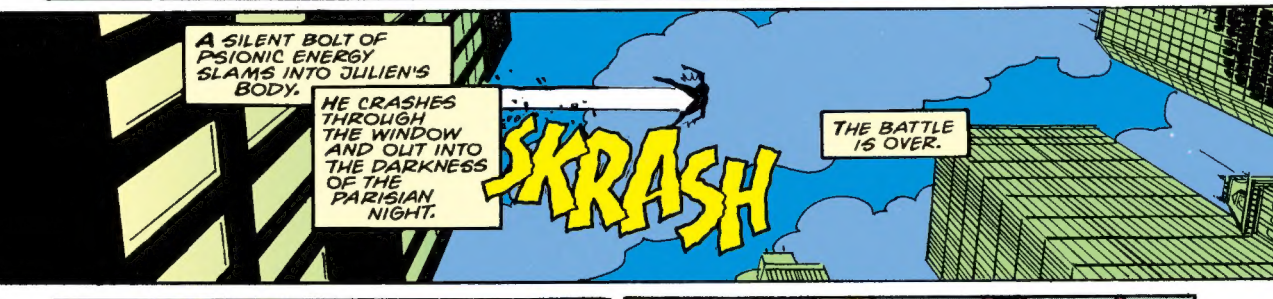
I STILL AIN'T TOO IMPRESSED.
KILL HIM. USE THE POWER THE WITCH GAVE US TO TEAR HIS HEART OUT!
BUT YOU, BENEFACTRESS...
...YOU ARE MINE!
HARD TO USE THEM POWERS OF YOURS WHEN THE LIFE IS BEIN' SQUEEZED OUT OF YOU, AIN'T IT?
YOU NEVER SHOULD BE MAKIN' PROMISES TO ME THAT YOU HAD NO INTENTION OF KEEPING.
I'LL COME AFTER YOU AND ALL YOUR KIND... THE EXTERNALS... I'LL KILL YOU ALL FOR WHAT YOU'VE TURNED ME INTO.
THWOK
THAT'S NO WAY TO BE TREATIN' A LADY, JULIEN.
BUT I REMEMBER NOW -- MANNERS WERE NEVER YOUR STRONG SUIT.

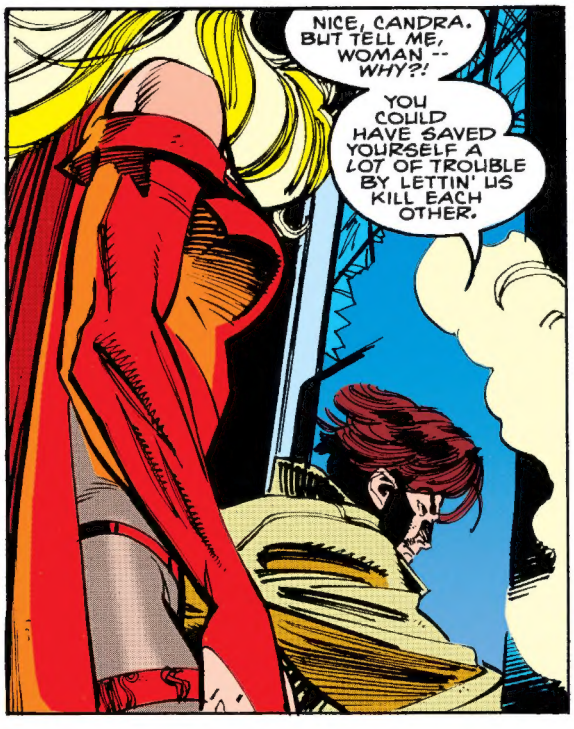
IF YOU KNEW HOW SHE HAS USED OUR GUILDS, THIEF, YOU'D BE HELPIN' ME INSTEAD OF FIGHTIN'!
APPEARS TO ME, YOU STILL LETTIN' HER USE US, JULIEN!
LETTIN' HER USE US TO KILL EACH OTHER OFF NOW THAT SHE'S GOT NO MORE USE FOR OUR KIND.
THOK
YOU AND YOUR RENEGADES ARE STILL DOIN' HER DIRTY WORK.
STILL LIVIN' AS SLAVES.
MEANWHILE, SHE'S GOT SOMETHIN' I NEED TO BE TAKIN' BACK TO YOUR SISTER.
THEN THE USIN'S GOIN' TO BE FINISHED!
KRAK
YOU WON'T HAVE MY SISTER, REMY!
I'LL SAVE HER! I'LL PROTECT HER!
SHE'LL LOVE ME... HER BROTHER... ME! JUST LIKE IT SHOULDA BEEN, 'FORE SHE MET YOU!
YOU'RE SICK, JULIEN.
PERHAPS. BUT YOU... REMY...
...YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE DEAD!
REMY! NO!
FATHER!

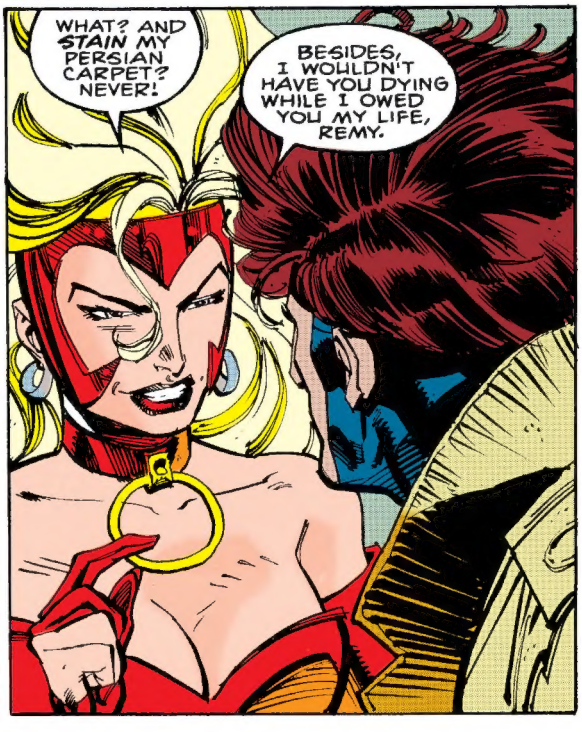
FATHER..!
NICE T'HEAR YOU STILL CALL ME THAT, SON.
DO WHAT YOU MUST DO TO SAVE YOUR WIFE...
I WILL, FATHER. BELLA DONNA AND YOU WILL BOTH LIVE!
IT'S OVER, JULIEN!
YOU GOT A HABIT OF TAKIN' AWAY TOO MANY IMPORTANT THINGS FROM ME.
YOU CHALLENGED ME TO THE DUEL THAT BROKE THE PEACE...
...AN' BECAUSE O'THAT, I HAD TO LEAVE NEW ORLEANS, MY FAMILY... BELLE!
I WON'T BE LETTIN' YOU GET AWAY WITH THIS STUFF NO MORE, BOY!
YOU SAY YOU WANT TO HELP BELLE, BUT ALL YOU'VE EVER BEEN INTERESTED IN...
IS YOURSELF!

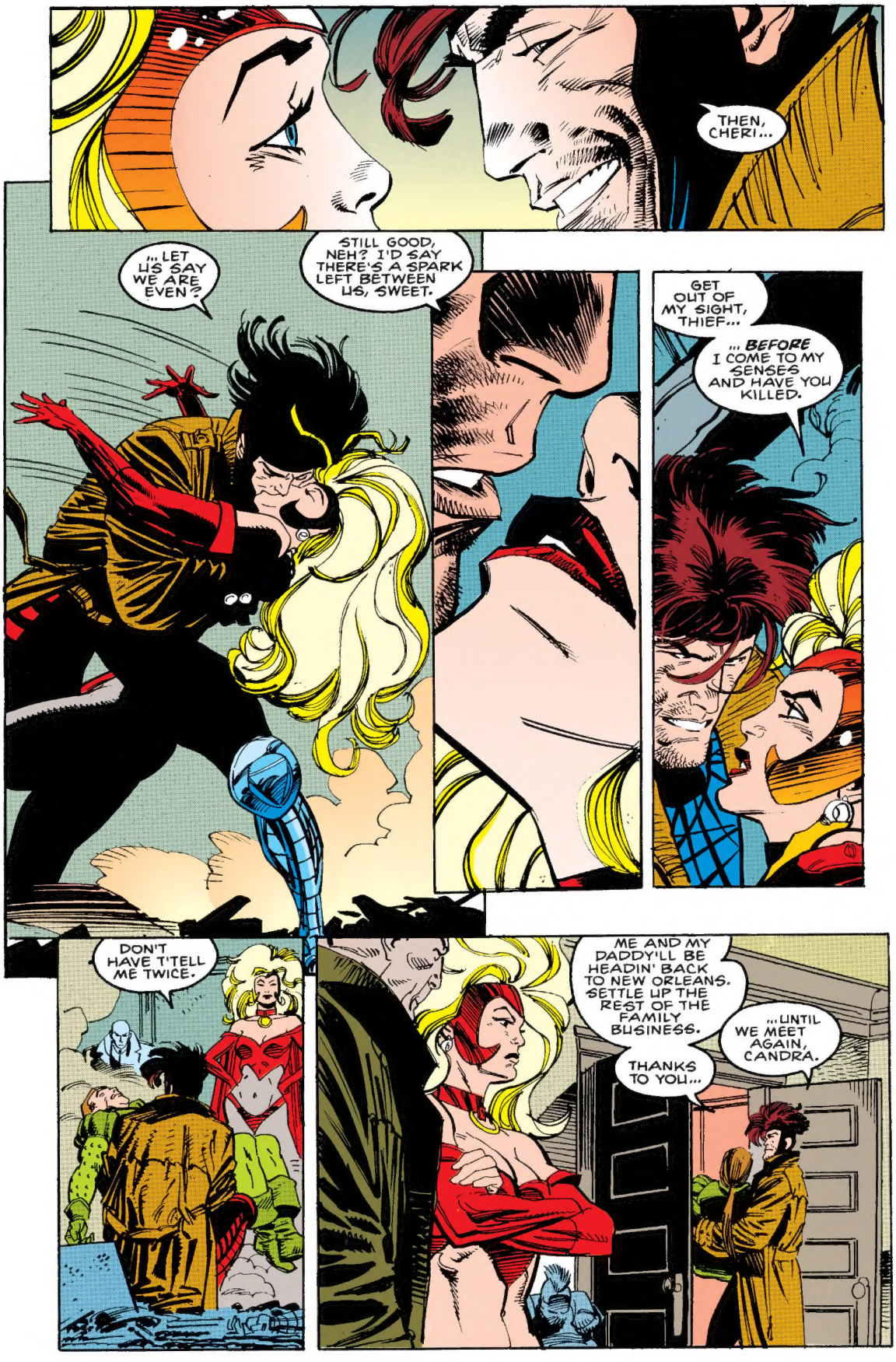
BACK TO THE BE-GINNIN'...
...IT ALL COMES DOWN TO JUST YOU AN' ME, DON'T IT?
I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY, THIEF!
YOU WON'T BE WALKIN' OUT OF HERE, JULIEN.
NO. HE WON'T.

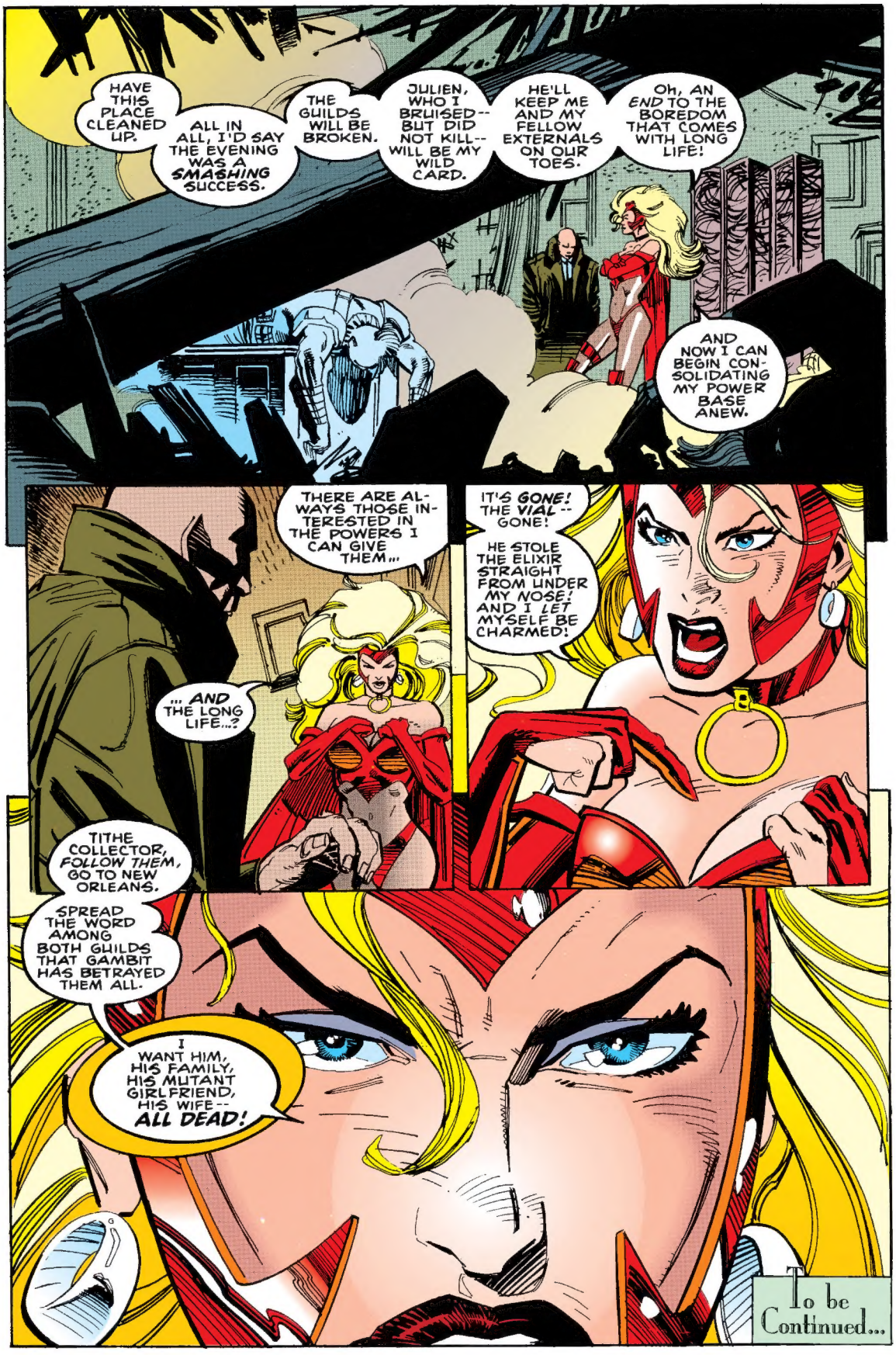
WHAT--?


A SILENT BOLT OF PSIONIC ENERGY SLAMS INTO JULIEN'S BODY.
HE CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW AND OUT INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE PARISIAN NIGHT.
SKRASH
THE BATTLE IS OVER.


NICE, CANDRA. BUT TELL ME, WOMAN -- WHY?!
YOU COULD HAVE SAVED YOURSELF A LOT OF TROUBLE BY LETTIN' US KILL EACH OTHER.


WHAT? AND *STAIN* MY PERSIAN CARPET? NEVER!
BESIDES, I WOULDN'T HAVE YOU DYING WHILE I OWED YOU MY LIFE, REMY.


THEN, CHERI...
...LET US SAY WE ARE EVEN?
STILL GOOD, NEH? I'D SAY THERE'S A SPARK LEFT BETWEEN US, SWEET.
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, THIEF...
...BEFORE I COME TO MY SENSES AND HAVE YOU KILLED.
DON'T HAVE T'TELL ME TWICE.
ME AND MY DADDY'LL BE HEADIN' BACK TO NEW ORLEANS. SETTLE UP THE REST OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS.
THANKS TO YOU...
...UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN, CANDRA.


HAVE THIS PLACE CLEANED UP.
ALL IN ALL, I'D SAY THE EVENING WAS A SMASHING SUCCESS.
THE GUILDS WILL BE BROKEN.
JULIEN, WHO I BRUISED-- BUT DID NOT KILL-- WILL BE MY WILD CARD.
HE'LL KEEP ME AND MY FELLOW EXTERNALS ON OUR TOES.
Oh, AN END TO THE BOREDOM THAT COMES WITH LONG LIFE!
AND NOW I CAN BEGIN CONSOLIDATING MY POWER BASE ANEW.
THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE INTERESTED IN THE POWERS I CAN GIVE THEM...
... AND THE LONG LIFE...?
IT'S GONE! THE VIAL -- GONE!
HE STOLE THE ELIXIR STRAIGHT FROM UNDER MY NOSE! AND I LET MYSELF BE CHARMED!
TITHE COLLECTOR, FOLLOW THEM, GO TO NEW ORLEANS.
SPREAD THE WORD AMONG BOTH GUILDS THAT GAMBIT HAS BETRAYED THEM ALL.
I WANT HIM, HIS FAMILY, HIS MUTANT GIRLFRIEND, HIS WIFE -- ALL DEAD!
To be Continued...